PERSONNEL TRANSFORMATION: THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

MG B. Sue Dueitt

Introduction

"If you don't know where you need to go, then any road will get you there" is a wise, old adage. The Army G-1's intent is that when the rest of the Army reaches the objective state of transformation in 2010, the personnel community will already be there transformed and ready for them. Therefore, the Army Personnel Transformation Task Force has laid down the conceptual framework to serve as an intellectual road map for human resources transformation. This framework supports the Army vision of "People, Readiness, and Transformation" by providing a relevant, reliable, reachable multicomponent human resources system with streamlined business processes, Web technology, and a realigned workforce.

Transformation: What It's Not

Army personnel transformation is *not* just the acquisition of a new automation system. Instead, it will convert outdated personnel processes and the myriad of "stovepiped" personnel systems developed during the Cold War into a coherent, single human resource system to provide real-time, relevant information. Some soldiers are already experiencing personnel transformation when they log onto their Army Knowledge Online (AKO) account from anywhere in the world and pull up their official military personnel file. When they find documents missing, they can digitally scan and electronically transmit them rather than hand carry or mail them into the Enlisted Records Center. This kind of self-service, direct-digital interface with personnel headquarters means soldiers don't have to lose valuable job productivity with a time-consuming trip to their unit's personnel service battalion during duty hours. Saving time and enhancing Army productivity are a big part of what Army transformation is about.

Army personnel transformation is *not* the same as the Defense Integrated Military Human Resources System (DIMHRS). DOD is congressionally mandated and resourced to develop and implement DIMHRS across all our military Services. Although DIMHRS is an exciting and important part of our transformation plan, it does not cover all the personnel capabilities needed by the Army's Objective Force. In FY04, the Army will be the first Service to begin fielding DIMHRS, which will use a commercial off-the-shelf software package called PeopleSoft 8 to transform numerous personnel functions and integrate pay functions. Army DIMHRS implementation will move us along our journey toward realizing our goal of providing modern, world-class, Web-based, paperless personnel operations across all Army components—Active, National Guard, and Reserve.

Army personnel transformation is *not* about simply automating existing personnel and pay processes or making small incremental improvements. It is not total quality management or continuous process improvement. Instead, personnel transformation seeks to radically change the way we do personnel work by adopting not only today's best business practices and Web technology, but also by focusing on the capabilities and flexibility needed to manage the Army force in an uncertain world.

Life-Cycle Functions

Army personnel processes are organized around the eight personnel life-cycle functions. These life-cycle functions are the core of what the personnel community provides. The need for these functions will not go away, but how we perform them will dramatically change.

- *Structure.* Balance force requirements with distributable personnel inventory.
- *Acquire.* Recruit and retain by grade and skill requirement against the current and planned force.
- *Distribute.* Assign personnel against mission priorities in an equitable manner while considering soldier preferences and need for training.
- *Develop.* Forecast training loads across components, and balance career development with readiness.
- *Deploy.* Mobilize, track and demobilize, and task-organize quickly across components.
- *Compensate.* Execute pay, benefits, and allowances.
- *Sustain.* Process awards, evaluations, and routine personnel actions.
- *Transition.* Move soldiers between National guard, Reserve, and Active duty until retirement; execute retiree recall.

Inherent in these functions is the need to focus on the critical personnel processes that ensure combat readiness, such as strength account, casualty management, and replacement operations.

To provide the capabilities needed for our future Army, such as the ability to "reach back" from the battlespace to our supporting locations, we must radically re-engineer how the eight life-cycle functional processes perform. (A process can be thought of as activities designed to produce a specified output, such as the evaluation process produces Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Reports.) For example, the

evaluation process redesign might consist of using "voice-to-text" technology to electronically transmit dictated evaluation information to a reachback facility, where the computer translates, prepares, and routes the report for review and approval via e-mail within a matter of minutes. Clearly, Army personnel transformation is about innovation and major changes to provide future human resource capabilities to man the Army's Objective Force.

Three Major Pillars

Most transformation efforts seem to focus on three elements, or pillars, and personnel transformation is no exception. The three pillars are:

• Re-engineering of functional processes and policies to achieve needed capabilities,
• Leveraging of new technology to improve functionalities, and
• Realignment of the organization structure and workforce.

Army personnel transformation seeks to define the capabilities needed to support an adaptive, future Army workforce that is evolving. First, those personnel capabilities must be achieved through redesign and streamlining of Army human resource policies and processes. Many of the personnel policies and processes will be imbedded in the computer software applications.

Second, personnel transformation will exploit technology like wireless and digital communications, the World Wide Web, and a centralized personnel database for all components. This technology will improve the speed, accuracy, and accessibility of personnel systems. But of paramount importance is the centralized personnel data against which all personnel functional applications will run. One database means soldier records will no longer be "lost" when soldiers transfer back and forth from Active component to the National Guard or Reserve.

Third, the size, shape, and skills of the personnel community must change to better use our civilians and contract support personnel, along with leveraging new technologies and capabilities. The military and civilian workforce will have fewer low-level data entry personnel and more customer service representatives.

Future Organizations

Personnel units in the future must be able to respond across the full spectrum of operations. We must have the flexibility to modularize and tailor the force in accordance with the needs of deployed units. The Army's Interim and Objective Forces will require a responsible personnel distribution system to task-organize "on the fly." It is well recognized that when future demands are unpredictable, an organization may need to expand or contract in response to mission requirements, and yet still be able to rapidly assemble the right personnel to deal with an evolving mission.

Modular personnel organizations have a standard way of linking selected professional staff, reconfigurable process modules, "hunks" of codified knowledge, and common computer-system protocols. When a deployment requires a modular personnel cell forward, the personnel unit can respond flexibly by deploying a customized cell to feed transactions to the reachback facility. Just like LEGO modules are snapped together, cells of personnel units might likewise be put together according to established rules.

Future Capabilities

The Army personnel community of 2010 could become a collection of assets, managed as a purposeful, adaptive organization that provides an array of capabilities. Joint and Army planning guidance stresses capabilities rather than requirements. Because it is impossible to predict the future, we must get better at reacting more quickly with flexible capabilities. Below is a list of capabilities to guide Army personnel transformation:

• *Reachback.* Conduct personnel and pay operations outside the battlespace, thus reducing footprint.

• *Universal Access to Self-Service.* Ensure all soldiers and employees have access to computers and AKO for reviewing and updating their personnel and pay records.

• *Intelligent Human Resource Software Applications.* Embed "smart" links in the software to aid users. For instance, if a soldier inputs a name change because of marriage, the intelligent software will show pop-up screens with reminders and links for also changing emergency contacts, insurance beneficiaries, will updates, tax withholding information, etc.

• *Unobtrusive Records and Knowledge Management.* Devise methods to automatically capture and store unit records, plans, and other documents. When an employee begins to type an operations order, a help icon will automatically offer sample documents.

• *Behavior Analysis and Correlation.* Use online entrance and exit interviews to track and analyze employee behavior. Analyze correlations between soldier behavior versus tour lengths, compensation, military occupational specialty, promotion, etc., to make better personnel policy judgments in these areas.

Conclusion

The Army personnel transformation journey is like that of the American pioneers who moved west in wagon trains. Just as those pioneers were unable to specifically identify their homestead locations in advance, we also are unable to specifically identify all of our transformation outcomes at this time. But just like the pioneers, we have no doubt that the direction we are headed is the right one.

MG B. SUE DUEITT is the Assistant Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, and Director of the Army Personnel Transformation Task Force. She has a Ph.D. in administration from the University of Alabama and is a graduate of the Army War College.